

BDMAT

Menopause Policy

Issued: July 2021
Review Due: Summer 2024



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 BDMAT is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.
- 1.2 It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work in the UK. It is therefore imperative that workplaces have a workable, informative and robust policy in place that is fully consistent with UK legislation.
- 1.3 The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and marks the end of her reproductive cycle. For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman's life and so it is imperative that workers who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.
- 1.4 The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it is intended as a support guide for all workers. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.
- 1.5 It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that 'people who menstruate' also require consideration.
- 1.6 Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.
- 1.7 The menopause can also affect partners and families too.
- 1.8 'Male menopause' is a misleading term because it suggests that hormone levels drop in a similar way to the female menopause and this is not true. Testosterone declines gradually and is unlikely to cause problems in itself. However, some men experience physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s and these symptoms can interfere with everyday life and happiness. Men are advised to seek guidance from their GP and further

information can be found on the NHS website.
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>

2.0 Legislation

- 2.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal women.
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all BDMAT staff and managers.

4.0 Purpose

- 4.1 This policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

5.0 Aims

- 5.1 The aim of this policy is:
- to create an environment where staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their menopausal symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work;
 - to ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution;
 - to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace;
 - to educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support such staff at work;
 - to raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce; and
 - to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available.

6.0 Definitions

- 6.1 *Menopause* is defined as a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reaches the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months. The average age to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.
- 6.2 *Perimenopause* is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.
- 6.3 *Post menopause* is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

7.0 Symptoms

- 7.1 It is important to note that not everyone will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe.
- 7.2 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some also experience difficulty sleeping.

8.0 Roles and responsibilities

- 8.1 All staff are responsible for:
- taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
 - being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR team;
 - if a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak directly to the BDMAT HR Officer or another member of the school's SLT;
 - contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
 - being willing to help and support their colleagues; and
 - understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.
- 8.2 All line managers should:
- familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;

- be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- use the guidance in Appendices 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to; where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:
 - discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
 - refer the employee to Occupational Health with the assistance and guidance from the BDMAT HR Officer;
 - review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical; or
 - update the action plan, and continue to review.

8.3 BDMAT HR Officer and Executive

- offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy;
- attend training sessions, and develop briefing sessions, for staff; and
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

APPENDIX 1 - Guidance for Managers Discussions with Employees

Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

Regular, informal conversations between manager and employee can enable discussions about issues related to menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference with how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.

It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager however, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health including symptoms of menopause it is important to:

- encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice;
- maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner);
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague;
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed;

- allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties they may be experiencing;
- explore with them ways in which they can be supported;
- agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion and agree a review timeframe; and
- provide details of support and external services available.

Confidential Discussion Record – Menopause

Date of meeting:

Name of member of staff: Job title:	
Name of line manager: Job title:	
Summary of discussion:	
Agreed action points/reasonable adjustments:	
Agreed date of review meeting:	

Signed (staff).....

Signed (manager).....

APPENDIX 2 – Workplace issues/suggested adjustments

Symptoms support

Symptoms can manifest physically and psychologically. Support for employees should be considered as detailed below.

Hot flushes

- request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source
- provide easy access to drinking water
- encourage use of the staff room for breaks

Heavy/light periods

- have permanent access to washroom facilities
- ensure sanitary products are available

Urogenital problems

This will include an increased frequency and urgency to pass urine, with a need to access toilet facilities more frequently and to drink more fluids. Suitable adjustments may include:

- providing ready access to suitable toilet facilities
- providing ready access to suitable washing facilities
- allowing more frequent breaks to go to the toilet
- providing easy access to drinking water

Headaches

- have ease of access to fresh water
- use the staff room as a quiet place to work when not teaching or when time out is required
- have time out to take medication if needed

Low mood

- agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area
- identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'

Loss of confidence

- ensure there are regular personal development discussions
- have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues
- have agreed protected time to catch up with work

Poor concentration

- discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse
- review task allocation and workload
- provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment
- offer quiet space to work

Anxiety

- identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to
- be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques
- encourage your colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Panic attacks

- agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- identify a 'buddy'
- undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk

Muscular aches and bone and joint pain

For individuals experiencing these symptoms, moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable. Suitable adjustments may include making any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an occupational health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

Internal links

HR Officer

Debbie Sharman d.sharman@bdmat.org.uk

Health Assured

Health Assured is a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This provides a 24 hour confidential help and support line for all staff employed by BDMAT and our governors, their partners and children living at home that are still in full time education aged between 16-24.

To gain access to the Health and Well-being Portal you will require the following login credentials.

MAT code: MHA147930

Username: BDMAT

Password: EAP

Contact Details: To find out more information on what services Health Assured can provide, please visit www.healthassuredeap.com or contact 0800 028 0199.

Links to other policies

Equality and Diversity

Capability Policy

Grievance Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Management of Sickness Absence Policy

Performance Management

These policies can be accessed on BDMAT's website.

<https://bdmatschools.com/documents/>

External links

Menopause Matters

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency)

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Menopause Services NHS GG&C

<https://www.sandyford.org/sexual-health-information/fertility/menopause/>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Living Life (Online/Telephone guided CBT)

<https://breathingspace.scot/living-life/>

Women's Health concern

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

Remploy (mental health support service)

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/employers/mental-health-and-wellbeing/workplace-mental-health-support-service-employers>

Henpicked (community site for women over 40)

<https://henpicked.net/>

Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause)

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>